



THORNCOMBE VILLAGE TRUST NEWS

Spring 2003

Number 28

THORNCOMBE VILLAGE TRUST

PRESIDENT Peter Moreland

The entire committee is standing down this year, - some of them are standing for re-election, and there are several nominations for new committee members.

The new committee will be voted in at the AGM on May 8th - details will appear in the Autumn issue of this newsletter and will be posted up on the village notice board.

Any members wishing for information about the Trust, or about the new committee can contact the present secretary Joan Lovegrove on 01460 30313

Butterflies in January?

A dramatic effect of climate change has been the change in butterfly breeding habits. A study published in *British Wildlife* magazine found that the brimstone, small tortoiseshell, red admiral, peacock and comma now appear an average of **74 days** earlier than in the 1940s, and that butterflies are fitting in two breeding periods a year because they are not hibernating until after October.

The red admiral butterfly has been seen flying as early as January, whereas up until the 1970s it was not seen before the end of May. Part of the reason is that this butterfly, a summer migrant from the continent, is overwintering in Britain.

Other studies have shown that plants are flowering earlier, grass is growing for longer, trees keep their leaves longer, and that the algae that form one of the most important food sources of the cod are moving north.

The most marked change has been noted in the holly blue butterfly which overwinters in a pupal stage to emerge in spring. The butterfly now emerges between 9 and 12 days earlier for every degree Celsius of warming.

Those interested in butterflies should note that the Butterfly Field Trip will take place on the 8th June, and will be a walk on Powerstock Common starting at 11 am (Map reference SY 547974).

The species we will be particularly looking for will be the Wood White, Marsh Fritillary and the Grizzled Skipper. Everyone is welcome - please phone Joan Lovegrove (30313) for details or transport enquiries.

Comments, queries and contributions to the editor, Rachael
Whitbread, 01460 30525

Trust Membership

The annual membership subscriptions are due in May. At the moment of writing Rachael and John Whitbread (30525) are still membership secretaries, so please contact them for payment if they don't call on you in the next few weeks. The cost has remained at £4 for a family, or £2.50 for an individual.

Membership entitles you to :

- free entry to our talks
- two newsletters a year
- the right to vote at our AGM

Members' subscriptions are used to further the aims of the Trust in various ways such as buying, planting and maintaining trees, and paying for speakers for our talks.

Rain - or the lack of it

After weeks of winter rain, we now seem to have had an unusually dry spring. Gardens in April looked increasingly arid and people began muttering about global warming, while those gardeners with drought-tolerant, desert-type plantings congratulated themselves. We tend to think of April as a showery, damp month but analysis of rainfall figures collected over the period 1974 to 1993 make interesting reading.

During these years April and July were on average the driest months, with July having 4.51% and April 5.47% of the annual mean rainfall over those years.

In contrast, over the same period, December and January stand out as the wettest average months. However, in 2002, November was the wettest month, with over 15% of the annual rainfall, and September the driest, with only just over 2%.

Figures supplied by Nigel Merrett.

Derrick Comley

Derrick Comley was a founder member of Thorncombe Village Trust, its membership officer and Parish tree Warden until his untimely death in 1999. The Trust placed a seat on the edge of Johnson's Wood – the woodland that Derrick created - in affectionate memory of his tireless work for the Village Trust and his love for the area. Hazel Comley sent this letter to the Trust after the family's visit to the seat.

On 22nd December 2002 Derrick Comley's family, all twelve of us, gathered in Thorncombe suitably booted and plodded through the mud to see the seat which the Village Trust has established as a tribute to Derrick.

It is a splendid seat, beautifully positioned and nothing could have pleased Derrick more. He loved Thorncombe and to be honoured in this way would have moved him deeply as it did his family.

We thank most sincerely all the people involved. Derrick would appreciate just how much work went into the project. Someone researched suitable seats, someone prepared the site, someone carried the seat into position, someone designed and ordered the plaque and someone made the path. We sat on that seat, enjoyed the view and thanked all the 'someones'. We also thank John and Vivienne Dalziel for entertaining us all.

We thank too all those who remember Derrick and continue the work he did with his beloved trees. In the winter 1997 issue of the TVT magazine he wrote about the Trust's planting and I quote from that article:

"And so, at the beginning of December, the new wood was planted, a fitting tribute to the work of the Trust and to the co-operation of a farmer, the local authority and the Dorset Wildlife Trust."

My five year old grandsons have visited the site and been told all about it. It is a happy thought that in fifty years time they may walk through a mature wood with their children and perhaps their grandchildren and remember that their grandfather and his friends gave them a growing gift.

We were all so proud. Derrick could not have a more appropriate memorial.

Hazel Comley.

To visit the seat yourself, walk down to the end of Wittey's Lane (the unmarked track next to Higher Farm in High Street), go straight over the stile, and through the next two fields towards the Dungeon. Before you reach the Dungeon stile you'll notice Johnson's Wood behind a fence on your left. Continue to the end of the fence and on the left you'll find a lovely new stile. The seat is at the front of the wood, overlooking the valley.

Don't forget our Plant Sale and Coffee Morning on Saturday May 18th at 10 a.m. – opposite the shop in Thorncombe – not to be missed bargains – arrive promptly! Any contributions welcome.